



AIA Minnesota Supports H.F. 6, The Providing Resources, Opportunity, and Maximizing Investments in Striving Entrepreneurs (PROMISE) Act

Dear Rep. Noor,

We are writing today on behalf of the 2,300 members of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Minnesota, representing architects and design professionals from across the state. Our organization supports this measure to help communities affected in the unrest move forward in the best way possible.

AIA Minnesota and members of our architecture community – as professionals who are entrusted with protecting the health, safety and welfare of the people of Minnesota through the buildings and structures we design – have been working to support individual businesses, business organizations, and neighborhood groups since the unrest following the killing of Mr. George Floyd. We have had the privilege of hearing their concerns, their goals, and most importantly, their visions for their neighborhoods. We have joined them in advocating for strong community ownership of the vision, processes, built structures, and economic benefit from what happens next in these areas, in a way that recognizes past harms while also creating the conditions for a bright future.

We applaud this bill for its emphasis on creating multiple resources that go beyond the needs covered by insurance, as many of the businesses and groups we have worked with want to build a better community than what was in place before. The needs in the impacted communities go deeper than demolition and reconstruction of property and it's clear you and your fellow bill authors understand that. As an example, visioning processes that fully engage communities in creating the neighborhoods and cities that will meet their current and future needs are incredibly valuable. But those processes take time, and therefore financial support.

And, of course, support for visioning and community engagement is not enough; it is also imperative that there be substantial funding focused on bringing those visions to life. Asking the community to create a new vision without helping build the buildings and community structures identified as key to that vision would be a repetition of the unrealized planning processes that have created distrust and frustration in neighborhoods and cities throughout Minnesota.

The areas of the Twin Cities affected in the unrest have long been economic contributors to the financial health of Minneapolis and St. Paul and the state of Minnesota. The businesses and residents of these areas don't just want to go back to what was – they want to be even stronger contributors to their local economies and to quality of life, thereby strengthening their contributions to the economy and quality of life of Minnesota as a whole. While borne of a terrible tragedy and decades of disinvestment and discrimination, many see this moment as a

once-in-a-century opportunity to create a better built environment – a model of what is possible when the voices of the community, attention to human health, and environmental stewardship are at the forefront.

Areas of Los Angeles and Detroit that were affected in past times of unrest were not rebuilt in a way that valued these places, or valued the people who created them and were served by them. Insufficient investment led these areas to lose local businesses. Even 25 and 50 years later, holes in the fabric of these cities remain. Those that have been filled are most often not of or for the communities that were most harmed by the circumstances that led to the unrest.

We need to learn from this history – not repeat it. If these neighborhoods are left to rely on corporate donations, charitable giving, and volunteer efforts, they will be less than they were before 2020. With a strong state investment, the Legislature has the opportunity to say that the people of Minnesota value the people and places that were affected in the unrest. When we invest in the creation of places that are designed and built with the needs of today and tomorrow in mind, we demonstrate faith in our collective ability to create a positive future. The people of Minneapolis and St. Paul, and the people of Minnesota, deserve this assertion of faith and this investment in a better tomorrow.

This bill is a critically important step in the right direction. The longer the legislature waits to assist the affected areas of Minneapolis and St. Paul, the more expensive construction will be, the more difficult it will be for these communities to retain and grow local businesses, and the more distant a positive future will feel for the people of Minnesota. Thank you for continuing to move forward with legislation in this area. AIA Minnesota and its members look forward to working with you on this effort.

Sincerely,



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